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# Integrating intercultural communication and cross-cultural psychology: Theoretical and pedagogical implications

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# Integrating intercultural communication and cross-cultural psychology: Theoretical and pedagogical implications

## Abstract

While psychology and communication have borrowed theories and methodologies from each other, much scholarly discussion tends to focus on the flow from psychology to communication. Relatively less attention has been paid to the work in communication that adds to psychology, particularly in examining the processes of developing relationships with culturally different others. It is timely for us to look at how communication theory and methodology have contributed to psychology in understanding differences between groups, as well as in improving intergroup relations. This paper focuses on intercultural communication, particularly acculturation of immigrants and sojourners as a clear intersection between cross-cultural psychology and communication. We aim to identify points of departure and points of integration between the two fields, drawing implications for theory in both fields and suggesting specific pedagogical tools to develop intercultural communication awareness and competence among psychology students.

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## Introduction

Communication involves developing relationships between people through the use of verbal and nonverbal codes; it is the means through which people exert influence on others and are, in turn, influenced by others. Although attitude change through communication (in its broadest sense) is a core research area in social and cross-cultural psychology as well as communication, the two disciplines have differences due to their different foundations. According to Hornsey, Gallois and Duck (2008), social psychology developed as part of experimental psychology and traces its roots to 19<sup>th</sup> century experiments, expanding the limits to human perception and motor behaviour. Communication, on the other hand, was built on a broader, more interdisciplinary base, starting from the ancient study of rhetoric, which extended across the social sciences. Methodologically, research in cross-cultural psychology (like other parts of the field) is mainly quantitative, using correlational or experimental designs, or using mixed methods combining qualitative with quantitative methods. However, qualitative methods, such as observational research, case studies, ethnographies, qualitative interviews, and textual analyses tend to characterize communication research. Despite the differences in origin and methodologies, psychologists, particularly those who make the study of culture the heart of their research, acknowledge that cultural similarities and differences influence how we see ourselves, how we perceive others and how individuals relate to culturally different “others” through communication – an area of particular interest to intercultural communication researchers.

Social and cross-cultural psychology has developed a rich repertoire of concepts for studying interpersonal interaction and language use and the important role language plays in acculturation processes (Berry, 2003; Clément & Noels, 1992). These concepts are ideally suited to investigating the causal factors that prevent undesirable or promote desirable outcomes of intercultural communication. Research in intercultural communication, like cross-cultural psychology but often unlike the rest of psychology, asks whether psychological principles are applicable to people beyond those who were studied. Nevertheless, cross-cultural psychologists tend to emphasize general principles and their variations across cultures, whereas intercultural communication emphasizes the processes that underlie interactions between cultures. Therefore, integrating these related but distinct disciplines should be mutually beneficial. Communication benefits from a psychological focus on causation (Kitayama & Cohen, 2007). Psychology benefits from the process focus and diverse methods of communication.

In this paper, we present an approach to integrating communication with cross-cultural psychology, which we hope will be useful to people who are teaching and doing research in these fields. We believe that a communication focus is essential to in-depth understanding of acculturation and intercultural competence, core areas of cross-cultural psychology. We start by identifying some points of departure and integration in the study of acculturation.

## **Points of Departure**

### **The universalistic perspective of psychology**

Acculturation has received considerable attention from cross-cultural and social psychologists over many decades. As a process of change, resulting from contact between people of different cultures, acculturation may occur either at a group or individual level, or both (Berry, 1997). Group level acculturation addresses the cultural changes that occur within a society, while individual level acculturation focuses on personal psychological processes that take place as individuals navigate through the new cultural environment. Group factors are associated with an acculturating group's origin, the society of settlement, and the changes that have occurred at the group level as a result of acculturation. Individual factors include demographics, motivation, expectations, perceived cultural distance and personality, along with those factors that occur during the acculturation process such as length of stay, age including age at migration, acculturation strategies, coping, social support, host language competency, and societal attitudes.

The most widely cited psychological theory for studying the acculturation of immigrants and sojourners is Berry's (1980) bidimensional model. Over the past years, the literature has consistently shown that adaptation – defined primarily as a combination of psychological well-being (e.g., life satisfaction, low depression, low anxiety) and sociocultural adjustment (e.g., making new friends, school adjustment) – is most effective amongst immigrants who adopt integration as their preferred strategy (e.g., Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013). This strategy is most preferred by new and old immigrants (Liu, 2007). There have, of course, been critiques of this research, based on conceptual and mainly methodological grounds (e.g., Rudmin, 2003; Ward, 2008).

Berry and Sam (1997) argue that their psychological models of acculturation adopt a universalistic perspective, despite differences among groups of people undergoing cross-cultural transition. The universalistic perspective is reflected in a significant body of work aiming at explaining factors that affect the cross-cultural adaptation experiences, whose findings are used to inform policy recommendations in relation to facilitating cross-cultural adaptation (Berry et al., 2006). One such example is the work by Bourhis, Moise, Perrault, and Sénécal (1997), who elaborated Berry's model at the societal level. Their interactive acculturation model predicts the success of adaptation by immigrants in terms of the match between their acculturation orientations and the larger societal variables, including public policy and community ideologies toward other cultures.

### **The particularistic perspective of intercultural communication**

The roots of intercultural communication can be traced to the Chicago School, known for their pioneering empirical investigations based on the concept of "stranger" proposed by Simmel (1858-1918). The notion of communicating with someone who is different to us lies at the heart of intercultural communication. Building on Simmel's notion of the stranger, Park (1924) developed the concept of social distance, which he defined as the degree to

which an individual perceives a lack of intimacy with people different in ethnicity, race, religion, occupation or other variables. Park's concept was later extended to "the sojourner", an individual who visits another culture for a period of time but who retains his or her original culture. The experience of sojourning often gives individuals a unique perspective for viewing both the host and home cultures. This more individually oriented perspective informed intercultural training for US diplomats and technical workers at the Foreign Service Institute in the 1960s, where it is believed that the study of intercultural communication originated.

This "interpersonally" oriented approach to intercultural communication is reflected in the models of cross-cultural adaptation developed by communication researchers. A widely applied model of cross-cultural adaptation from the communication perspective is Young Y. Kim's integrated theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation. Kim (2001) explains that cross-cultural adaptation is interactive and fundamentally communicative; it is

"the dynamic process by which individuals, upon relocating to new, unfamiliar, or changed cultural environments, establish (or re-establish) and maintain relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationships with those environments" (p. 31).

This model addresses two issues: 1) How acculturation unfolds over time; and 2) Why there are variations in the rate and outcomes of cross-cultural adaptation for different individuals. Kim's (2001) view of the process of cross-cultural adaptation is both problem-oriented and growth-oriented, taking into consideration differences in individuals' demographic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds. One assumption is that sojourners from cultures significantly different from that of the host country may experience greater difficulties in adaptation (Swami, 2009).

According to Kim's model, in the initial phase of cross-cultural adaptation, migrants may experience "draw-back" as they undergo stress in their interactions with the host culture. As migrants grow more accustomed and comfortable with the host culture, they experience a "leap forward". This process is explained as a stress, adaptation and growth dynamic that is a continual cyclical process of cultural learning and intercultural transformation achieved through communication. Interaction may be interpersonal (e.g., interacting with particular individuals in the host culture) or mass-mediated (e.g., reading or watching/listening to mass media, which may afford a less risky form of interaction for immigrants), but it is always communicative. Where psychologists, including cross-cultural psychologists, pose a black box linking features of immigrants, host and home cultures, which leads to acculturation outcomes and thence to social and psychological outcomes, communication researchers emphasize the features of the context (as well as the interactants) and the process of interaction. To these researchers, the process of cross-cultural adaptation is not seen as an end but as continuing negotiation.

## **Points of Integration**

### **The stress perspective as a basis of acculturation**

Berry's model of acculturation has predominantly been used by cross-cultural psychology researchers, while the integrated theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation and related theories (e.g., Gudykunst, 2005; Ting-Toomey, 2005) have been dominant in intercultural communication. These models differ in their disciplinary origin, but they share the same acculturative stress perspective and acknowledge the key role of intercultural contact. Common to both models is the assumption that adaptive change occurs as a result of contact between cultures, and this change process is inevitably stressful (Berry, 1997; Kim, 2001).

Berry (1980) argues that people's disorientation, misunderstanding, anxiety and stress occur as a result of cultures clashing due to differences in values, beliefs, customs and behaviours. Kim (2001), on the other hand, views stress as a trigger of intercultural growth and transformation. In dealing with stress, individuals re-organize themselves and develop adaptive changes in order to respond to the unexpected and new situations (Kim, 2005). Moreover, the factors posited as key to cross-cultural adaptation overlap and complement each other. These key factors relate to language and communication styles and competencies, prior experience, acculturation orientations, adaptation of new social and cultural norms, values and customs, expectations of life in the host society, social support and societal attitudes (Berry, 1997; Kim, 2001). Surprisingly, research in this area from cross-cultural psychology has been done almost completely independently of similar research in communication, and there is very little cross-field citation by researchers. Combining the two perspectives gives us a richer understanding of acculturation at both individual and group levels.

### **Bicultural identity as an indicator of integration**

Both communication and cross-cultural psychology models place emphasis on the development of bicultural or intercultural identity. Although immigrants' adaptation can be at different levels, ranging from personal to cultural, at the most basic level it is about identity – who we are and how we relate to others. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) posits that our sense of identity influences and is influenced by the groups we belong to; this group-based social (cultural) identity influences how we see ourselves (self-concept) and others. Kim (2005) suggests that intercultural transformation includes the development of an intercultural identity, which integrates home and host cultures. Similarly, Berry's (1980) model of acculturation posits that acculturation provides the means for which one's home culture and identity, and that of the host culture, can be integrated in a bicultural manner. Berry (1997) suggests that sojourners are able to grow and develop in both home and host cultures simultaneously. Integration and a bicultural identity have been regarded as indicators of successful cross-cultural adaptation (Berry, 2006; Kim, 2001); they provide individuals with access to support systems in both cultures, thereby reducing alienation. Moreover, individuals with bicultural identities are better

equipped to reconcile the potentially incompatible demands from home and host cultures (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005).

Intercultural scholars have made some attempts to understand bicultural identities (e.g., LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997; Sirin & Fine, 2007). Notably, the concept of Bicultural Identity Integration (BII; Benet-Martinez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002) seeks to capture the extent to which bicultural individuals perceive their home and host cultural identities (e.g., Chinese and American) as compatible and integrated (high BII) versus oppositional and separate (low BII). However, BII (and other frameworks of bicultural identity) do not explain how distinctive identities can be reconciled. In addition, BII is conceptualized and operationalized as static, based on the assumption that individuals' attitudes and behaviours are constant across different contexts and life stages. Liu's (2011) research in communication shows that this is rarely true in practice. Liu has conducted studies with long-term migrants to examine integration processes. Thematic analyses of interviews with Chinese immigrants found that they described "being integrated" in two different ways: shifting between cultures according to situational characteristics, and blending cultures to form a third cultural identity (similar to findings from the study on third culture individuals reported in Moore & Barker, 2012). A typical example of "shifters" came from a Chinese gift shop owner who described his integration as being a cultural chameleon: "If you are in a flock of sheep, you need to look like a sheep; if you are among a pack of ducks, you need to look like a duck" (Liu, 2011, p. 410). "Blenders", on the other hand, believe that integration is a process of creating a new cultural identity that has aspects atypical of either home or host culture, but larger than the sum of its parts. A Chinese takeaway shop owner compared her blended identity to the sandwich in her shop, which combines Chinese with Western cuisine to make a new product (e.g., sandwich with Chinese food flavour) that is not found in either typical Chinese or Western cuisine. While both types believed they were integrated, they meant different things. It will be important to understand the processes underlying each type of bicultural identity, how these identities affect communication and other social behaviour, and whether one type of bicultural identity is more integrative across cultures, languages, and contexts.

Social identity processes within bicultural or multicultural individuals have been largely neglected in research (Benet-Martinez, 2012). Such understanding would help to account for the range of outcomes associated with biculturalism (Benet-Martinez et al., 2002). Multicultural exposure can be associated with pride and belonging, but it can also be linked to identity confusion and cultural clashes. Many researchers argue that integrating two or more cultures in one identity leads to greater benefits than choosing to identify with a single culture (e.g., Berry, 1997). Others argue, however, that the process of dealing with more than one culture and acquiring more than one behavioural repertoire can cause stress, isolation, and identity confusion (Benet-Martinez, 2012). A recent meta-analysis based on 83 studies and over 23,000 participants indicates that findings are mixed with regard to the direction and magnitude of the association between integration (biculturalism) and acculturation outcomes (Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013). These mixed findings cannot be easily reconciled using existing theoretical and methodological

paradigms commonly used in cross-cultural psychology (Eller, Abrams, & Gomez, 2012). Integrating intercultural communication with cross-cultural psychology in a multi-method approach should capture the complex relationships among acculturating conditions, bicultural identities, acculturation attitudes, and outcomes.

### **Psychological well-being, sociocultural adjustment, and intercultural competence as acculturative outcomes**

Researchers from cross-cultural psychology and intercultural communication also share views on acculturative outcomes. One outcome of the stress-adaptation-growth model is improved psychological health, similar to what cross-cultural psychologists refer to as psychological adaptation (Ward & Kennedy, 1999). Another outcome is a more effective functionality in the new environment, termed functional fitness, similar to sociocultural adaptation in Berry's model. Kim (2001) suggests that the development of communication abilities in line with new cultural norms is directly linked to functional fitness and psychological health. This is because increased communication effectiveness in the host society allows increased participation and the development of sociocultural skills. Individuals develop more effective functionality as a result of the stress experienced during acculturation.

Kim's model focuses primarily on the development of intercultural communication competence, which she asserts is fundamental to the process of cross-cultural adaptation. The intercultural communication competence approach focuses on immigrants and sojourners, including tourists, business people, diplomats, and international students. Its point of departure is more in anthropology (cf. Hall, 1976) and sociology (cf. Gumperz & Hymes, 1972) than in either cross-cultural psychology or intercultural communication (Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005). Intercultural communication competence training is mainly intended to develop knowledge, attitudes, and skills for effective communication with members of a new culture (Chen & Starosta, 2005). Measures of successful outcomes include learning appropriate new language and communication skills, the ability to interact in a satisfying way in the new culture, task productivity, satisfactory completion of the sojourn, and good social and psychological adjustment (Hammer, 2011). In Kim's (2001) cross-cultural adaptation model, successful adaptation of immigrants or sojourners to the host culture also requires host communication competence and host interpersonal communication. Simultaneously and interactively, host communication competence shapes a sojourner's overall capacity to participate in host interpersonal communication, and both host communication competence and host interpersonal communication shape a sojourner's participation in long-term intercultural transformation (Kim, 2005). It needs to be noted, though, that the expectation is that the larger communicative adjustment is to be made by the immigrant.

Theories of intercultural communication competence highlight the importance of cultural values and norms underpinning psychological processes such as anxiety, stress, self-concept, identity salience, and social identification. For example, Gudykunst's (2005) theory of anxiety/uncertainty management proposes that the combination of motivations,



knowledge, and skill is mediated by uncertainty and anxiety and moderated by mindfulness in determining effective intercultural communication. Similarly, Ting-Toomey's (2005) identity negotiation process model posits that self-identification is mediated by the identity continuum of security-vulnerability and inclusion-differentiation, as well as by identity coherence and individual-collective self-esteem in determining effective identity negotiation. These approaches all give pre-eminence to communication, while acknowledging that successful intercultural communication outcomes are mediated by psychological factors. At the intergroup level, intercultural communication competence can promote intergroup understanding, help reduce prejudice and achieve better intercultural relations. People with higher levels of intercultural communication competence tend to have greater amounts of contact with others from different cultures, and experience lower levels of stress from these cross-cultural encounters (Brislin, 1981). Previous research has found that higher intercultural communication competence facilitates social interaction with host members and a greater sense of psychological adaptation (see Sam & Berry, 2006 for a review).

### **A caveat: Intercultural communication as intergroup**

Thus far, we have discussed communication models of acculturation and intercultural communication competence that are close to models current in cross-cultural psychology. It is important to mention another literature, located in the social psychology of language and communication (i.e., at the intersection of social – but not cross-cultural – psychology and intercultural communication) that posits intercultural encounters as reflections of the social history between cultures as well as individual (particularly social identity) and interpersonal factors. This research tradition is based in the work of Tajfel and Turner (1979). In communication, it is exemplified by communication accommodation theory (CAT; Giles, 1973; see Gallois, O'Garra, & Giles, 2005, Giles, 2012, for reviews).

Those in the intergroup tradition are strongly critical of traditional concepts of acculturation and intercultural communication competence (cf. Cargile & Giles, 1996), because they rest on the assumption that there are no impediments to effective communication other than the competence of immigrants or sojourners and members of the host culture. In fact, competence training has sometimes failed because sojourners, hosts, or both are unwilling to communicate well. The models of acculturation and communication competence we discuss here work well when people are motivated to get on with each other. When motivation and intergroup history involve conflict and rivalry, however, sometimes the more competent a communicator is, the less effective the communication will be, because skills are used to non-accommodative ends (Gallois, 2003). Bourhis et al. (1997) made an attempt to include intergroup factors in their extension of Berry's acculturation model, but they stopped short of a full intergroup analysis. It is important to remember this caveat when teaching or training in intercultural communication: Competence is not a panacea, and if the intergroup (i.e., socio-political) context is sufficiently negative, competence can make things worse.

One benefit of the intergroup approach is that the communication models within it are aimed to link intercultural communication to other kinds of intergroup interaction (e.g., inter-generational, inter-gender, inter-professional, inter-ability). This is a trend that is emerging in cross-cultural psychology, but communication work in this tradition is now very well-developed. Models like CAT are being developed, which take into account of both interpersonal and intergroup factors.

### **Theoretical Implications**

Culture influences the perceptions, construals, thoughts, feelings and behaviours of its members. The specific contents of culture are influenced by individual level processes that govern the contents of communication (Matsumoto, 2002). The content of intercultural communication is also constrained by many different psychological considerations. For example, socially shared stereotypes are influenced by concerns ranging from impression management to social identity (Lehman, Chiu, & Schaller, 2004).

There are various examples showing the contribution of communication research to psychology, resulting in growth in both disciplines. Gudykunst (2005) draws out the relationship between management of uncertainty and anxiety and effective communication in his Anxiety/Uncertainty Management theory. CAT (see above) is another example, positing that the motivation of a speaker to communicate in an intergroup or interpersonal way is determined largely by intergroup history, which is a major but not the sole influence on communication strategies, reactions, and evaluations. In this tradition, every intercultural encounter is both intergroup and interpersonal.

Another example of this kind of thinking is expectancy violations theory, based in the core communication model of uncertainty reduction theory (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Uncertainty reduction theory explains and predicts the communication strategies people use to reduce uncertainty when they meet others for the first time. Expectancy violations theory, however, explains the effects of violations of expectations as predictors of interpersonal behaviours. The theory posits that, during interpersonal and intercultural interactions, expectations are established about communication behaviour. Violations, especially when they are in a negative direction, can cause arousal, distraction and distress. This results in the need for individuals to adapt to the interaction either through reciprocity, compensation or non-accommodation in their communication (Burgoon & Hubbard, 2005). The key assumption in this theory is that humans are predisposed to adapt to one another.

“Regardless of cultural background, people adjust and adapt their behaviours to each other and exhibit an inherent tendency to become entrained with each other” (Burgoon & Hubbard, 2005, p. 161).

Furthermore, there is pressure towards reciprocity and matching during interaction. Communication goals play a crucial role in deciding if reciprocity or compensation is used

during an interaction. Rogers and Ward (1993) also reported that larger experienced difficulty than expected produced greater expectation discrepancies, which in turn were significantly associated with psychological health problems. Conversely, they reported that low discrepancies between expectations and experience resulted in lower levels of anxiety. Burgoon and Hubbard (2005), Pitts (2009), as well as Rogers and Ward (1993) have used expectancy violations theory to explain how expectations may be violated during cross-cultural adaptation. Their work and related work go some way to explicating the process underlying the acculturation orientation adopted by an immigrant or a sojourner.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

High mobility of people and contact between cultures due to migration, business, education, and international exchanges makes the development of intercultural relations fundamentally important for education (Bleszynska, 2008). Intercultural competence is increasingly recognized across the global spectrum of educational institutions, corporations, government agencies and non-government organizations as a central capability for the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Hammer, 2011). With the increasing tendency toward globalization, it is more important than ever to equip students with the knowledge and skills to function effectively and appropriately in intercultural encounters. By integrating the insights about culture in cross-cultural psychology with the emphasis on process in intercultural communication, we are uniquely positioned to help create a better world by continuing to study people in different cultures and guiding educational systems and processes so that people are better equipped with the skills necessary to live amidst this increasing diversity.

Intercultural education involves critical thinking, because it asks the all-important question “Is what I know to be true for one cultural group also true for another”? By asking this question, intercultural education naturally facilitates critical reflection on one’s own perception of “the right way of doing things”. In the case of communication, this invokes questions like the following: How do people’s perceptions of their own culture affect their communication with members of other cultures? How do speakers modify their use of language and non-verbal behaviour depending on the cultural affiliation of their audience? How do these variations influence the audience’s attitude towards the speaker and his or her group? In the context of intercultural communication, people may try to adapt their behaviour as a function of specific norms associated with their social identity. How and when do these forms of identity performance obstruct or facilitate intercultural communication? Addressing those questions will guide educators to develop programs aimed at improving the intercultural communication skills of students. To achieve the goal of equipping our students with the capacity to function effectively in culturally diverse contexts, we have developed some exercises that have proven successful among our students. We will provide some of them here. While we use these exercises for

communication courses, they are equally applicable to courses targeting psychology students.

The first example is a reflective essay on one's own culture and how the culture which one is socialized into governs communication behaviours. This assignment provides students an opportunity to reflect on their own culture and cultural identity. It is described in Appendix 1. When we used this assignment in class, the initial response from many students was that it was "too easy"; some even questioned whether or not it was a genuine assignment. Their assumption was that they are all socialized into their own culture and know it inside out. However, when students actually embarked on the assignment task, to the surprise of many, they found it quite challenging. This was because that very few of them had really reflected on their own culture; it had been taken for granted. This exercise opens students' minds to the assumed familiar (their own cultural beliefs, values, and identity), and how the familiar is used to govern communication behaviours including expressing needs and wants, resolving conflicts, and showing agreement or disagreement.

The second example is an intercultural report, a practical assignment where students go beyond the university environment to experience other cultures and to communicate with people as an outgroup member. This assignment can be completed in pairs, in small groups or as individuals. Appendix 2 presents a description of the assignment. This assignment has been very popular among our communication majors, who regard it as enjoyable, eye-opening, and educational. We are often not aware of the cultural rules governing communication behaviour until those rules are broken. The opportunity of being a foreigner enhances cultural awareness and sensitivity, and fosters understanding of cultural others, mainly immigrant groups. This experience also makes students appreciate the difficulties and ordeals that immigrants encounter when they interact with host nationals, in most cases in a non-native language. The experience also drives home the importance of developing intercultural communication competence, not just as an immigrant or sojourner, but also as a member of the host culture.

The third example contains a series of exercises and activities enabling students to see the role of the mass media in shaping how we see ourselves, how we see others, and how we should communicate to outgroup members (see Appendix 3). We ask students to identify stereotypes that are constructed and perpetuated through the mass media, and how media-constructed "pictures in our head" influence our communication behaviour. We also ask students to find out who owns the media outlets from which they have extracted the information and discuss with their classmates how the ownership of media organizations influences media content. Such activities allow students to see the possible role the mass media play in intercultural communication and the environment for immigrant adjustment in their country.

The fourth example also contains a series of exercises and activities, but they are designed to create awareness of the relationship between language and culture (see Appendix 4). These exercises work more effectively in smaller classes where students have more opportunities to interact with peers in groups. For example, we ask students to write down some common idioms or proverbs from their own culture, and discuss in class the cultural dimensions they reflect (e.g., collectivism, power distance, high-context

language). Then we ask students to compare the literal meaning of those idioms or proverbs with their figurative meaning. Students can form into small groups to discuss how someone who is not a native speaker of the language might misinterpret these idioms or proverbs. Another exercise on taboos makes students appreciate the difficulties immigrants encounter, and the importance of host communication competence. Students are asked to identify the qualities (or stereotypes) they associate with people who speak their native language with an accent, and the implications for developing good intercultural relations.

## **Conclusion**

This paper aims to identify intersections between intercultural communication and cross-cultural psychology, drawing implications for theory and pedagogy. Intercultural communication research typically focuses on identifying cultural differences specific to groups and the process of communicating across them, whereas cross-cultural psychology as a sub-discipline of psychology is more interested in locating fundamental human universals and their variants across cultures (Lehman et al., 2004). Integrating the two lines of research, conceptually as well as empirically, will generate insights into the important relations between communication and psychology, and the contribution of culture to both. Such disciplinary integration will encourage us to adopt multiple research methods in studying the interaction of communication and psychology. Integrating different lines of research will also inform our design of innovative teaching methods to achieve diverse educational goals. Psychology, informed by intercultural research, is uniquely positioned to help create a better world by continuing its study of people from different cultures, its improvements to knowledge of psychological processes, and in guiding future educational systems and processes so that people are better equipped with the psychological skills necessary to live within this increasingly diverse society.

The goal of intercultural education is to get people to explore and understand how and why differences exist, so as to promote understanding. Understanding is the first step to developing harmonious intercultural relations, and university education needs to develop intercultural knowledge and skills in graduates so that they can survive and thrive in the larger multicultural environment beyond university. The development of intercultural competence requires more than transmission of cultural knowledge. Individuals need to learn critical thinking about their own beliefs and actions (Hoskins & Sallah, 2011). Incorporating intercultural communication training in the university curriculum broadens perspectives and engages students critically across multiple domains, promoting better understanding of local environments and global perspectives.

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## Appendix 1

Your reflective essay tells others who you are as a member of a cultural group. You may include information about your country, your ethnic group, beliefs and values, traditions, customs, religion, and so forth. Reflecting on your own culture and how it governs your communication behaviour will greatly help you to understand other cultures. You should apply concepts and theories of communication and culture learned in class and from readings. Include the following sections in your reflective essay:

- Title of your reflective essay
- Characteristics of your culture. You may discuss some beliefs, values, worldviews, traditions, cultural customs that are important to you as a member of that cultural group. You may also provide a context for how members of your cultural group communicate your culture to others outside your own cultural group.
- Your reflection. Reflect on how your own cultural identity and identification have shaped your understanding of yourself as a cultural being, and how you communicate with others outside your cultural group.

## Appendix 2

This assignment provides you an opportunity to experience intercultural communication in your local community. You are required to attend and participate in one cultural event organized by members of a culture different from your own. Examples of these cultural

events include cultural fairs, weddings, church activities, performances, and so forth. You may need to search the local newspapers and other sources to locate these cultural events. Write a report of the cultural event and your reflection on this intercultural experience. Your report should cover your observation and learning about the specific culture from your participation and attendance at the event; and your reflection on your position as a non-member of the culture. This can be accomplished by using effective observation skills, by talking with people at the event about the significance of the event in their culture, and by gauging your responses to the event. You should note the reactions, thoughts and feelings elicited by the experience, and then make connections between what you have learned at the event and concepts/theories of intercultural communication learned in the course. Include the following sections in your report:

- Title of the report
- The event  
Provide a brief description of the event and its significance to the people who organized it.  
Provide a justification for your choice of the event.
- Observations  
Explain what you experienced at this event that you understood accurately.  
Explain what you experienced at this event that was culturally puzzling to you.
- Problem Statement  
Identify what you think might be the major difficulties in communication between people from the cultural group organizing the event and people from your culture.  
Relate your analysis of the problem(s) to theories and concepts learned in the course.
- Reflection  
Reflect upon your experience of being in a different cultural situation that was not as predictable as communicating in your familiar cultural environment.  
Discuss what you have learned from this intercultural experience in relation to theories and concepts learned in the course.

### **Appendix 3**

- Read through a national newspaper. What elements of national identity can you identify from it, and how are they expressed? For example, certain news stories may reveal a country's dominant values, which are part of its national identity.
- Read through your local newspaper – what evidence of gender-laden language can you find? What stereotypes or images does the language reinforce? Share your findings with your class.

- Locate an example of the mass media perpetuating a particular stereotype, bring it to class and explain its significance to your classmates. What stereotype does the story perpetuate, and how?
- Do a search on the internet and make a list of global media organizations. Find out who owns them. Discuss with your classmates how the ownership of media organizations influences the content of the media. Discuss the possible implications of this on intercultural communication and immigrants' adaptation in your country.
- Join a social networking site. Set up a forum to discuss the following questions: How does online social networking affect human relations? What impact does online social networking have on young and old generations?
- Gather the answers from people who have participated in your forum, analyze the responses and write an essay about your findings.

#### **Appendix 4**

- Find and write down five proverbs or adages from your culture. Share them with the class and discuss the cultural dimensions they reveal (e.g., collectivism, power distance, high-context culture).
- To gain some understanding of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, try to explain the concept of a car without using the words 'wheels', 'drive', 'road' or 'transport'. This shows how difficult it is to convey a concept when the language and understanding associated with it is absent. Then divide into small groups of three or four students. Each student in the group tells others an incident/event that happened in the previous week. The group can specify that certain words cannot be used in the description.
- Make a list of some common idioms used in your language and culture. "Translate" each idiom into what it actually means (the figurative meaning of the idiom) and compare each with its literal meaning. How might someone who does not speak your language as a mother tongue misinterpret some of these idioms?
- What qualities do you associate with various accents or dialects? Are these based on direct personal experiences or purely on stereotypes? Can you isolate specific aspects of an accent that trigger those associations? What are the implications for intercultural interactions? How are regional dialects viewed in your culture? Are stereotypes attached to certain dialects?
- Have you had to communicate with someone who didn't like you? How did you deal with this situation? What do you think is the most effective way to communicate with those with whom there is a stereotyped understanding?

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